

# THE LUSIADS AS THE EPIC OF LOVE

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by

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*Gentlemen of Cornell University:*

For the third time I appear before an American College as a Camonian Rhapsode; alas! not, like the Greek Rhapsodes, to repeat the poet's own verses, but to translate them into foreign prose, taking away much of his power. No doubt the highest part of Poetry is thought, communicable from man to man through any language, and therefore the BIBLE and the ILIAD remain the greatest of all works in whatever language they may be translated. But if the essence of poetry is thought, not sound, which is only a vehicle for it, the question of impressing thought is a very important one. The original verse, in the poet's own language, has a direct grasp upon the memory and makes mind resound with it throughout life, while the prose translation does not interest the auditive, the musical mechanism of mind.

The other night, at Vassar College, I made Camoens introduce himself as a love singer. To-night he will appeal to you as the Poet of Love; that is, you will see the lyric poet changing into the epic. I hope these Addresses on Camoens will call the attention of a few among the American students to one of the greatest names of modern Literature and to the beauty and poetry of our language. I am often asked to speak in Spanish, so general is the belief here that in Brazil we speak Spanish. The expression Spanish America is

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used here for the whole of Latin America. I have no objection to it in the old historical sense of the word *Hispania*, although we generally employ the word *Iberia* in that sense. But Portuguese is a very distinct language from Spanish, and was bound to have a different literature. Both are transformations of Latin, with few signs of a different national formation between the two, but the ear of the Peninsula peoples that divided into two Nations was somewhat different, and the differences introduced by it in their common Latin speech were sufficient to form languages of different resonance.

There are words which are the exclusive flowers of a language and which by their constant use, as some trees show the kind of lands where they grow, reveal the character of the race speaking that language, or of the epoch when they come in full blossom. The difference between Portuguese and Spanish could not be better shown than by the predominance in Portuguese of the word *saudade* and its premature death in Spanish. With reference to this word you should read the note of Prof. Henry R. Lang, of Yale University, in his book, *CANCIONEIRO GALLEGO-CASTELHANO* (pp. 199-201).

The bulk of Portuguese, at the time of the foundation of the Monarchy, was the Galician dialect, that is, Latin as it was spoken in Galicia. Autonomy under a French ruler, Henry of Burgundy, brought about in the new Lusitania a different national tendency, which local influences widened each day. Spanish shows the Arabic influence more than Portuguese, not perhaps so much in the vocabulary as in its guttural harshness. The greatest boast of the Portuguese language is expressed by Camoens, explaining Venus's love for

the Portuguese by their similitude with her old Romans, mainly in their language, "which, when she thinks, seems to her with light corruption to be the Latin."

E na lingua na qual quando imagina  
Com pouca corrupção crê que é a Latina.

After saying a word on the language, I will say one on the country. Small as Portugal was, her mark in history may be well compared to that of Spain, as during nearly a century the genius of navigation, the secret of the Ocean, was hers. There is no name in Portugal in the field of art to be opposed to Velasquez, or Murillo, or Goya. She has no Cathedrals to be compared to those of Burgos or Toledo. Nothing to rival the Alhambra. Yet if you put all that together in a scale of the balance, adding to it *DON QUIXOTE*, and put the *LUSIADS* in the other, I doubt which would weigh more, just as if all ancient Art was weighed against the *ILLIAD*, I believe Homer's scale would remain immovable.

You know the Poet's life. There is nothing of importance added to it since Longfellow's sketch. His ancestors possessed a manor in Galicia, and to it is attached the legend of the bird called *camão*, which would die of grief if it saw unfaithful the lady of the house, as he says in one of his love-verses.

Experimentou-se algum' hora  
Da ave, que chamam *camão*,  
Que se da casa onde mora  
Vê adultera a Senhora  
Morre de pura paixão . . .

Let us hope that the bird which gave his name to the family justified the wronged lady before her husband

and that they took his name out of gratitude for him. But, one way or the other, the legend shows that love was an influence with the Camoens. With the poet it was a fatal influence, except that it fed him, so to say, from the cradle to do the great work of his life. Love was the cause of his exile from Lisbon, of his relegation to Africa, of his imprisonment, of his engagement for India, of all his adversities, but the cause also of his glory. It kept him in a kind of useless life, which was, however, the only one fit to produce his immortal masterpiece. There is nothing sure about his loves, except that he was always unfortunate in them and that he never repented of loving. There is a tendency to reduce them all to one, but we really do not know how many they were, nor the difference of intensity and earnestness between them. No one can say if his references are to the same person, nor who she was. No doubt one love which he depicts as a life affair, writing in his maturity, eclipses the others, but he might have forgotten. Worst of all, it is impossible to identify the young lady to whom his most beautiful and saddest complaints went. Several young women of his time have their champions, although none appears herself as a postulant for glory.

Of all rival claims that is the most delicate for one to arbitrate upon, as there is the risk of robbing a woman of her immortality. I do not know if it is quite safe to limit the selection to the ladies of the Court named Catherina, although Catherina, whoever she was, may remain her name for history, her literary pseudonym. There is no allusion by the hand of Camoens himself to any Catherina; the name was brought out before posterity long after his death, and comes from no document whose authenticity one could

really ascertain. All that can be said is that he wrote verses to one Catherina, unless he wrote them to two. The Queen being a Catherina, the young Catherinas certainly abounded in the Court.

In his youth and prime Camoens was a constant writer of love-verses, and only the misfortunes of his life, caused probably by the daring of his love ambitions, would make him soar so much higher. Some indiscretion in his love affairs caused his exile from the Royal Court, and, after it, his enlistment to fight the Moors in Africa, where he was wounded and lost one of his eyes. This wound marks an epoch for the Portuguese literature. His hopes as a general courtier were dispelled by it, his pride as a lover was withered, and he felt at the mercy of anyone who looked at his disfigured face. He calls himself "Polyphemus," while his beloved one is "Galatea." It makes all difference in love if one receives a deformity.

It is impossible not to notice the strange means that Fate employs to bring the Poets to give their best, as fortune does not bring forth the same kind of work as misfortune, and there is nothing more pathetic than the soaring above circumstances, by which genius insists in serving his inspiration. In fact, the great poet, as a human creator, leads a double and contrary life: enjoying real bliss in the companionship of his creatures during his greatest personal sorrows, and suffering agonies with them during his own raptures. Without Milton's blindness his PARADISE would have been a very different composition, and without Camoens' disfigurement his poetical work would probably have all been of the personal kind. It was that wound that made him give up in despair love, court life, Lisbon, Portugal, and to open his sail in the direction of the

LUSIADS. Nearly all great men would have preferred power, honors, success in life, the pleasures of wealth, to everlasting fame, if left to themselves. It is fate that, for their sake, either persecutes them from the outside, or turns them into their own persecutors. I do not know how it will be henceforth. Among the many new departures brought about in our times, there is the creation of a literary profession. What was before a vocation is now a lucrative career. Only a very high conscience will stop a dealer on the way to fortune from taking advantage of the public favor and from watering his inspiration. I am afraid that opulence will upset all the noble traditions of a craft, which misfortune has played so large a part in purifying and subliming. It is true that the cycle of Literature seems to be already closed, the goal of the human ideal having been attained in it, as well as in Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Music and Religion.

During years and years Camoens was a Petrarca, finding in his own feelings an endless source of poetry. He grew a poet of the highest order, drawing only upon his loves, until he wrote that inimitable *Canção* (*Canzone*) the eleventh, which of all his lyric poems I would like to read to you for you to understand better how and why love had the greatest part in the inspiration of the LUSIADS. It is such a strain of harmony as rarely came from the heart of a poet, passing in review his life, all given to love, and all spent in false hopes and wasted affections. I did not bring it, because there would be no time during this address for you to forget the man and follow serenely the evolution of the poet.

In despair of finding protection and good-will around him, Camoens, to save himself from the prison where he was confined, enlisted for military service in India

and left Portugal in the spring of 1553. It was a long voyage of about six months, much exposed to shipwreck, and to fatal diseases. During that voyage he gathered the inspiration of the *LUSIADS*; not, probably, that he then had the conception of the Poem, but that he conceived the part which the sea and the ship-life will play in it. Then, in India, the voyage of Vasco da Gama, who opened those seas, grows on him and becomes the tie of the whole composition. Its aim is to celebrate the doings of the *LUSIADS*, the progeny of *Lusus*, son of *Bacchus*. When he was shipwrecked, at the mouth of the Mekong, between 1559 and 1560, his Poem was as good as complete. There is no reason for dismissing the legend that he worked on it during his stay at Macao in China. The filial piety of the Portuguese-speaking races will forever remain attached to that far-Eastern shrine. He may have added to the Poem during his stay in Mozambique, in 1567, and until its publication; but the time that the inspiration of his work lasted, cannot have been so long as his stay in India. It is a law of genius that the same inspiration cannot remain unbroken for many years, much less for a whole life.

The three principal factors in the composition of the *LUSIADS* are the poet's life-habit of love, his really extraordinary stores of classic knowledge, and his national ambition. There is a tradition that, either in Sofala or Mozambique, Camoens woke up a morning in great joy, saying he would write a great song, as if the idea and the plan of the *LUSIADS* had been revealed to him. I can well believe in this *eureka* the moment that the national ambition struck the immense material he had accumulated and the fountain of poetry he had

in his mind. That morning the personal phase of the poet ended. Art turned love, which had been for him a personal obsession, into a divine sense; converted the poisonous blade, with which he only tortured himself, into the chisel, that would carve the national Poem.

I commented at Yale University on six great impressions of the *LUSIADS*: country worship; the poetry of the sea; mythology; the age of discovery; the spirit of the Renaissance, and, lastly, the law of the greatest effort in life. I reserved to present it at some other time, which happens to be now, as the poem of love, and I hope to have still an occasion, in my wanderings as its propagandist, to turn to the light other of its most brilliant facets. Indeed, if you study the *LUSIADS*, you will see that two parallel chains run through it: there is the patriotic chain and the love chain, each with its distinct summits, such as, for the first: the Invocation to Dom Sebastian, the battle of Ourique, the battle of Aljubarrota, Dom Manoel's dream, the departure of Vasco da Gama from Belem, the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope, to speak only of the first Cantos, and as for the love chain, those truly radiant summits: Venus before Jupiter in the first Canto, Ignez de Castro in the third, Adamastor in the fifth, the forge of Cupid and the Isle of Love in the ninth.

You will excuse me for translating myself what I will read to you. There are several translations of Camoens in English verse, but in all of them there is a strong collaboration of the translator with him, and I like him better alone. It is invaluable the service they have done for him, they make many read him who would not have read him in English prose, and I owe much to them in my own translations, but I think the

true poetry of the *LUSIADS*, when deprived of its music, appears better in foreign prose.

To show that the *LUSIADS* is the poem of Love, it is enough to say that it is the poem of Venus. Camoens did not fear the *Æneid*, and all who compare his Venus with that of Vergil will agree that the question: *Which of the Venuses is the most beautiful?* is an insoluble problem in literature, as it is in Statuary or Painting. The pictures of Venus by Camoens are the *pendant* in poetry of the frescoes of Venus in the Farnesina by Raphael. With her, all throughout the poem, the power of love is made to appear the dominant force of the Universe.

After the incomparable picture of Venus in the second Canto, the great love page of the *LUSIADS* is the tale of Ignez de Castro. The story of Ignez de Castro, called, from her long neck, *Collo de Garça*, Heron's Neck, is widely known. She was a young dame at the service of Dona Constança, the wife of Prince Dom Pedro, heir to King Affonso IV. The Princess died shortly after her marriage and for ten years Dom Pedro and Inez thought only of enjoying their love in the greatest privacy. The possibility of her ascending the throne together with his son incensed the old King against her and rival courtiers, by his order or with his consent, killed her in Coimbra in the absence of her lover. The tradition of the time is that they had been secretly married. A few years after her death, the Prince, coming to the throne, took a most cruel vengeance on those of her murderers who could not escape him, and had her remains removed from Coimbra and given a royal tomb at the Monastery of Alcobaça, where she lies by his side. The legend sung by Camoens is that he crowned

her in death and that her exhumed body received the vasselage of the nobility and the people seated by his side in all the pomp of royalty. The whole history of Royalty does not record a similar coronation.

I will read you the episode of Ignez de Castro, only being sorry that you cannot hear it in the melodious and pathetic stanzas of Camoens.

"That prosperous victory once over, Affonso returned to his own realm to enjoy peace with so much glory as he had won in the hard fought war, when occurred the sad case, worthy its fame, which lifts up the dead from their tombs, of the frail and unhappy maid, who was made a Queen after her death.

"Thou alone, pure love, with that crude force which binds to its will every human heart, were the cause of her being murdered, as if she were an enemy of thine. If it is said, cruel love, that thy thirst is not even quenched with the saddest tears, it is because, harsh tyrant, thou wishest thy altars bathed with human blood.

"Thou wert resting, fair Ignez, in perfect quiet, enjoying the sweet fruit of thy youth, in that gay and blind delusion of the soul, which Fortune does not allow to last, there in the never forgotten meadows of the Mondego, never dry of the tears of thy lovely eyes, teaching the hills and the shrubs the name thou hadst engraved in thy breast.

"Therein answered thee the remembrances which always dwelt in the soul of thy Prince, and which ever brought thee back to his eyes, when apart from thy fair ones: by night in pleasant lying dreams, by day, in thoughts, that flew away; but all that he dreamt or saw were memories of your common happiness.

"He refuses the much desired nuptials of other fair Ladies and Princesses, as thou, pure Love, scornest everything when a suave mien captivates thee. Seeing those enamoured whims, the grave old father who respects the murmuring of his people and the freedom of his son who will not marry,

"Determines to take Ignez away from the world to take from her his enchained son, believing that only the blood of an unworthy death could extinguish the burning fire of his firm love. What madness let the fine sword, which had sustained the whole weight of the Moorish fury, be raised against a feeble and delicate woman!

"The horrible hangmen were bringing her before the King, already moved to compassion, but the people with false and ferocious reasons

persuaded him again to the foul murder, when she began to entreat the cruel grandfather, with sad and pitiful words inspired by the regret and remembrance of her Prince and of their little children whom she had to forsake, which grieved her more than death itself.

"Raising her tearful eyes to the crystalline skies, as her hands were being tied by the hard and pitiless Ministers, and then bringing them down upon her children so dear and so sweet, whose fate as orphans dismayed her, she thus addressed the King:

"If already wild beasts, whose minds nature has made so cruel from birth, and birds of prey, only intent on aerial rapine, have shown so tender feelings towards little children, as with the mother of Ninus and the twin founders of Rome;

"Thou who hast the features and the heart of a man, if it is of a man to murder a feeble and defenseless girl, only for having subdued the heart of him who succeeded in winning her, respect these little children, since thou dost not stop before her own dark death; let thyself be moved by compassion of me and of them, since it does not move thee my being innocent.

"And if, overcoming the Moorish resistance, thou knowest how to deal death by iron and fire, learn also how to deal life by clemency, to one who did not commit any fault to forfeit it. Still if my innocence deserves so much from thee, place me in a perpetual and wretched exile, in cold Scythia or in burning Lyberia, where I may ever live in tears.

"Place me where all ferocity would await me, amidst lions and tigers, and I will see if I can find in them the pity I did not find in human breasts. There with intrinsic love, and with all my will put in him for whom I die, I will rear up these relics of him, which you saw here, as a relief for the lonely mother."

"The benign King wished to pardon, moved as he was by words that pierced him; but the stubborn people and her fate did not forgive her. Holding such a deed to be right, they drew their swords of fine steel. O butcherly hearts, how fierce you show yourselves against a lady, you knights!

"As against the lovely maiden Polyxena, the last solace of her aged mother, the cruel Pyrrhus arms himself with his sword, because the shade of Achilles condemns her, and she, as the patient and sweet lamb, offers herself to the sacrifice, resting her eyes, which calm the air around, upon her unhappy mother, mad with grief.

"Thus against Ignez the brute murderers, bathing their blades in the neck of alabaster which sustained the works with which Love killed with love him who later will make her a Queen, and

tinging with blood the white flowers she had watered with her tears, glowed with fury, not dreaming of the future avengement.

"Well mightest thou, O Sun, have diverted that day thy rays from their eyes, as thou didst from the dire table of Thyestes, when he ate his own children through the hand of Atreus. You, concave valleys, that could hear the last sounds from her cold mouth, you echoed for long spaces the name of her Pedro.

"So as the candid and lovely daisy, cut before time, loses its perfume and its hues, spoiled by the heedless hand of the maid who had it in her wreath, so lies dead the pale young damsel, the roses of her cheek all faded, her white live color gone with her sweet life.

"Weeping, the daughters of the Mondego, long remembered the sombre death and, as an eternal memorial, converted the wept tears into a pure fountain. They gave it the name, which still lasts, of the loves of Ignez spent on its banks. See what a fresh spring bathes the flowers! Its waters are tears and its name Love."

This is the end of the story of Ignez de Castro. Now the two stanzas in which the Poet sketches the reign of her husband, called Dom Pedro o Crú, Dom Pedro-the-Hard. The death of Ignez traced out his mission as that of an exterminator of crime.

"Not much time elapsed before Pedro wreaked the vengeance of his mortal wounds, since he fell upon the fugitive murderers as soon as he took the reins of power. They were surrendered to him by another Pedro, most cruel, as the two had no pity for human life and made between them the dire and unjust compact which Augustus made with Lepidus and Anthony.

"This one was rigorous chastiser of robberies, of murders and of adulteries; his most certain solace was to commit cruelties in his wrath against the bad ones, while, in his justice, keeping cities free from the oppression of the powerful lords. He gave death to more robbers than wandering Alcides and Theseus."

There are not among the royal tombs in Europe any two linked together by such strong tie of poetry as the twin ones, of Dom Pedro, called the Hard, and the sweet posthumous Queen, Dona Ignez de Castro, at Alcobaça. Nor is there a more poetical spot than the

Quinta das Lagrimas, in Coimbra, the Quinta of Tears, with its stately trees and its waters, consecrated to the imperishable legend of the loves of Ignez.

You all have heard of the greatest creation of Camoens in the LUSIADS, the huge and ugly giant who had the guard of the Cape of Storms. In a book of 1803, Clarke's PROGRESS OF MARITIME DISCOVERY, a true monument to the Portuguese achievements, there is a frontispiece plate entitled the *Spectre of the Cape*, which is a worthy illustration of the episode of Adamastor. A gigantic dark cloud hangs over the Cape tableland, the storm flashes in the East, Vasco da Gama's ship, with her foresail torn to pieces, plunges on a quaking sea. There is all around a display of the furies of Nature that corresponds to the verses: "What threat from Heaven or what secret does this climate and this sea present to us that appears mightier even than tempest?"

Que ameaço divino ou que segredo  
Este clima e este mar nos apresenta  
Que mór cousa parece que tormenta?

What is characteristic of Camoens is that while he makes of Adamastor a horrid evocation, with "a frowning visage, a squalid beard, deep-sunk eyes, an awful posture, the colour pale and earthy, the crispy hair loaded with clay, the mouth black and the teeth deep yellow," and while he personifies in him the blind and relentless forces that opposed the advance of man on sea, he gives him the tenderest heart that any lover ever had. Even in his terrifying prophecies the giant shows himself sensible to the woes of love, as in his touching picture of the death of Sepulveda and of his beautiful young wife in the sands of Africa. The part

he is made to play, of barring the sea gate of the East, does not leave so deep impression on us as the tale of his love, upon which even eternity seems to have no power. Poetry for Camoens, if not limited to love, was always convertible into love, at its higher power.

Modern literature has added no myth but this one to the grand series of Homer and Hesiod. Adamastor is, as Ignez de Castro, one of the triumphs of love in the *LUSIADS*. I will translate the narrative which the giant makes of his metamorphosis, for you to say if ancient Poetry left a finer creation than this. Truly the age capable of adding to the old Mythology a myth that would have enriched it, richly deserves the name of Renaissance.

"I am that hidden and great Cape which you named of Tempests, never known to Ptolemy, Pomponius, Strabo, Pliny, nor to any of those who passed. . . . Here I end all the African coast on this my never seen promontory, which extends towards the Antarctic Pole, whom your presumption now so much offends.

"I was one of the fiercest sons of Earth, like Enceladus, Ægeus and the Centiman; my name was Adamastor, and I took part in the war against him that hurls Vulcan's bolts; not that I piled hill upon hill, but, conquering the waves of the ocean, I was Captain of the sea, where wandered the fleet of Neptune, which I was pursuing.

"Love for the noble spouse of Peleus led me to undertake such great enterprise. I scorned all the goddesses of Heaven only to love the princess of the waters. One day I saw her with the daughters of Nereus come out all bare on the shore and at once my will was so enslaved that even now I do not feel anything that I long so much for.

"As it would be impossible to obtain her through the ugly hugeness of my face, I determined to take her by arms and I told Doris of my intent. The Goddess in dread speaks to her for me, but she with an honest and candid laughter replied: 'What love of a Nymph would be enough to bear that of a giant?'

" 'Still to free the ocean from so much war, I will seek a way to excuse my honour and to avoid the harm.' The messenger brought me that answer, and, as the lover's blindness is great, I would not

see the snare and my bosom was filled with abundance of raptures and hopes.

"Fooled, renouncing already war, one night promised by Doris, I saw at a distance the beautiful form of the white Thetis, alone unrobed. Like mad, I run from afar, opening my arms to her who was the life of this body, and I begin to kiss her lovely eyes, her cheeks and her hair.

"Oh, from humiliation I hardly can say more. Thinking I had in my arms the loved one, I found myself embracing a rugged mountain of the harshest wood. Standing, face to face, before a stone which I clasped for the angelic figure, I remained not a man, but deaf and motionless, and close to a rock, another rock.

"Oh, Nymph the most fair of the ocean, since my presence does not please thee, what would it cost to keep me in this deceit, were it mountain, cloud, dream or nought? Raging and well nigh insane from the grief and the shame suffered there, I left in search of another world where none would scoff at my tears and my despair.

"Meanwhile my brethren were vanquished and in extremest misery placed, some, for the greater surety of the Gods, lying beneath various superposed mountains, and, as against Heaven hands are of no avail, I began, while weeping my misfortune, to receive from an enemy Fate the penalty for my audacity.

"My flesh is converted into solid earth, my bones into rocks, and these limbs, which thou seest, and this form were extended along these long waters; at last, my enormous stature was changed by the Gods into this remote Cape and, to double my woes, Thetis is surrounding me with her waves." (V, 50-59.)

It is with a full hand that he scatters love in his poetry. This touch, for instance, in the description of a storm:

"The alcyon birds raised their melancholy song near the wild coast, remembering their own fate caused by the furious waves; the enamoured Dolphins entered the sea caverns for shelter against the fierce winds, which do not let them remain secure even in the deep." (VI, 77.)

"As halcyoneas aves triste canto  
 Juncto da costa brava levantaram,  
 Lembrando-se de seu passado pranto,  
 Que as furiosas aguas lhe causaram.  
 Os delphins namorados entretanto

La nas covas maritimas entraram,  
Fugindo á tempestade, e ventos duros,  
Que nem no fundo os deixa estar seguros."

When Venus sees from her morning star the danger of her favorite crew, she at once bids her Nymphs go and conquer the winds.

"And so it was done, for as soon as the winds come into their sight, the strength with which they were fighting fails them and surrendering they obey. It seems that their hands and feet were tied by tresses that dim the light."

And the poet tells us the sweet reproaches of Orithya "the most beautiful" to Boreas:

"Do not believe, wild Boreas, that I believe thou ever felt for me a constant love, as sweetness is the surest array of love and fury does not suit a true lover. If thou dost not put at once a rein to so much insanity, do not hope me henceforth to love you, but only to fear you, as with thee love is turned into fright."

Copy *Lusiads* 6°, Canto LXXXIX.

"Não creias, fero Bóreas, que te creio  
Que me tiveste munca amor constante;  
Que brandura é de amor mais certo arreio,  
E não convem furor a firme amante:  
Se ja não pões a tanta insania freio,  
Não esperes de mi d'aqui em diante,  
Que possa mais amar-te, mas temer-te;  
Que amor contigo em mêdo se converte."

I will only mention another intervention of Venus, when she and the nymphs put their breasts in front of the Portuguese ships to save them from running to certain destruction. I said at Yale that Camoens converted Gama's log-book into poetry. In this case he made use of an incident related in the *Roteiro* of Vasco da Gama that, his ship being reluctant to turn round, when he ordered the dropping again of the anchor, the

native pilots threw themselves overboard for fear that their planned treachery had been discovered.

Everything he touches becomes poetry because of that ray of love. Vasco da Gama arrives in Melinde on an Easter Sunday. Here it is how he dates the event:

"It was at the joyful time when the Phoebeian light was entering the ravisher of Europa and began to illumine both its horns, while Flora poured forth that of Amalthea."

That is the spring with its sun and its flowers.

"The speedy sun, turning round the sky, was again renewing the memory of the day in which He to whom everything is subject put his seal to all he had done."

That is the Resurrection.

Now the description of Cupid's love forge in the Idalian mountains. Camoens is really a combination of two souls: he is a Greek poet, as well as a modern one. Cupid's forge is worth the Greek imagination in all its freshness. Here is the new Camonian myth:

"She (Venus) arrays her chariot with the birds (the swans) who celebrate in life their own exequies and with those (the doves) into which Peristera was changed while gathering daisies. . . . Around the departed goddess sound in the air kisses of love, but, where she passes with a soft gesture she makes serene the skies and the winds.

"She already bends her chariot over the Idalian mountains, where her archer son was assembling many others to make a famous expedition against the rebel world to mend great errors being committed there by people who love things which were given to man, not for love, but for use.

"He saw Acteon so austere in the chase, so blind with its brutal and insane joys, that, to follow a fierce ugly beast, he flies all company and the beautiful human form, and as a chastisement, both sweet and severe, Cupid wishes to show to him the loveliness of Diana. Let him beware not to be devoured by those same hounds he now loves!

"He looks to the highest of the world; none thinks of the public welfare; their love is all for themselves and those for whom Philautia (self-love) teaches them to have regard; he sees those who frequent the royal palaces sell for good and sound doctrine only adulation, which does not consent that the young growing corn (the young King Dom Sebastiam) should be winnowed.

"He sees that those who owe divine love to poverty and charity to the people, only love power and riches, simulating justice and integrity; they turn ugly tyranny into right and call asperity severity. Laws are enacted in favour of the King, and only perish those in favour of the people.

"He sees, in fine, that none loves what he ought to love, but only what he wrongly wishes. He does not think the punishment should be any longer delayed, but that it must come hard and just, and summons therefore his Ministers to take a sufficient army for the fights he expects to have with the ill-governed race, who will not show obedience to him.

"Many of these flying boys are engaged in different works, some sharpening penetrating irons, others thinning arrow stems; and, while working, they sing of love, modulating in verse different episodes, with a sonorous and well adjusted melody, the lay sweet and the song angelical.

"In the immortal furnaces where they were forging the piercing points of their arrows, instead of wood, hearts were burning, many of the human vitals still palpitating; the waters, where they tempered the iron, were tears of unhappy lovers; the vivid flame, the never dying fire, was only desire that burns, yet not consumes."

And in four stanzas more he describes the effects produced among the lowest and the highest of mankind by the shots of the little army of Cupid's "ill-trained boys" and the description of Love's workshop continues until Venus alights from her chariot, in the stanza 36 of the ninth Canto.

This stanza could be given to you in Portuguese as a taste of the music of the language, and of the Poet's sonority. I do not think there are many others in the Poem that show the qualities of Portuguese to greater advantage. I will give it in parts. I will read the first four verses, not surpassed in any language for their rhythm, and which form a most ideal picture.

Mas já no verde prado o carro leve  
 Punham os brancos cysnes mansamente,  
 E Dione, que as rosas entre a neve  
 No rosto traz, descia diligente. . . .

"Already in the green meadows the white swans softly depose the light chariot, and Dione, in whose face roses blossom amid snow, promptly alights."

And the Poem ends with that wonderful apotheosis of Love, the Isle of Love, which Venus makes appear before the Portuguese ships and where herself and the Nymphs feast the heroes for their discovery of the new world. I have often referred to that immense poetical fresco, without its equal in literature, which stands to the gardens of Armida as Nature to enchantment.

I will read only the beginning of it:

"From far they saw (the Portugese heroes) the cool and beautiful isle which Venus was pushing to them through the waters, as the wind pushes the white sail, so that they could not fail to see it. But as soon as she saw that they had sighted the island and were sailing to it, she made it firm and immovable, as Delos remained while Latona gave birth to Apollo and Diana. At once the prows cut the sea turned to where the coast forms a little bay, curved and quiet, whose white sands Cytherea paints with rosy shells.

"In the lovely and delightful isle three beautiful hills were seen rising with a graceful pride and all enamelled with grass; clear fountains spring from the summit, covered with shining verdure, and the fugitive sonorous water glides softly amid the white pebbles.

"The clear streams join together in a delightful valley that opens the hills and form a table as beautiful as could be imagined. A fine grove of trees hangs over it, as if to adorn themselves, by seeing their perfect image in the brilliant mirror.

"A thousand trees grow to the skies with odoriferous and fair fruits, like the orange which has the hue that Daphne had in her hair. . . . .

And so on, in other stanzas, about the fruits. And then:

"The lovely and fine tapestry that covers the earth takes much of their beauty off the Achemenian ones, (the Persian), but renders sweeter the shady valley. Here the Cephisian flower (the narcissus) inclines its head over the serene and transparent pond, and blossoms the son and grandson of Cinyra's (Adonis converted into the anemone) for whom thou, Paphian goddess, still sighest."

And after some more stanzas describing the flowers with those fine touches of legend, he brings forth the Nymphs:

"It was amid all this freshness that the second Argonauts left their ships for the woods where the beautiful goddesses allowed themselves to remain, as if they knew nothing, some playing sweet citharas, others harps or sonorous flutes, while others, with golden bows, feigned to follow animals they did not follow."

And then the chase of the Goddesses by the Discoverers runs through more of twenty stanzas, the whole Canto Ninth being really given to the Isle of Love. It is a wonderful composition, of exquisite beauty in many of its details, in unsurpassed grandeur in its whole. It would be enough to characterize Camoens as the Poet of Love, if he had written nothing else. I must add, it is as pure as a heavenly vision, the love in Poetry and Religion being purified of all earthly corruption, the Houris of the Mohammedan Paradise, the Valkyrs of the Valhalla, the Nymphs of the Isle of Love being so many allegories of glory, of hero-immortality.

Camoens would not, however, have been the complete Poet of Love he was if the dying or dead Chivalry had no part in his Poem. It has, in the episode of twelve Portuguese knights, who went to England to fight a tournament for twelve wronged English ladies that had found no defenders among their own countrymen.

I hope I have justified my view that Camoens' great-

est source of inspiration was love. He accustomed himself to love, in love he transformed everything, and, when he ceased to care for women and absorbed himself in the national Poem, his experiences made him give true life to every episode in which love played a part; he understood love as the controlling force of life as well as of Nature, the principal means of the Ideal, the source of all creation, love, but not its spurious homonyms, which he so strongly condemns in his Poem.

The teaching of the *LUSIADS* could be resumed in the lesson for men to defeat Death, quoting the verses of its opening stanzas:

Aqueles que por obras valerosas  
Se vão da lei da morte libertando.

“Those who by noble deeds are freeing themselves from the law of death.

Or, as Sir Richard Fanshaw translated them into Elisabethan English:

. . . and Those who by  
Their deeds at home left not their names defac't.

The Poem is thus a school of immortality; not of personal immortality only, of collective immortality, such as that of the unknown Discoverers and Conquerors, who surrounded Vasco da Gama, and of love aiming at its highest mark, that which makes the immortal ones. In everything he commends the high kind of love, as “the low enfeebles the strong.”

Que um baixo amor os fortes enfraquece.

III, 139.

Speaking of the selection of Vasco da Gama and of his crew, he will say:

"They were rewarded by Manuel, so that they armed themselves with greater love, and were encouraged with high words for all labors that might come. So were collected together the Minyas to fight for the golden veil, in the fatidic galley, which dared, adventurous, to tempt the first the Euxine sea."

*Fatidic*, because the ship Argo was made from trees of the prophetic forest of Dodona.

"Assi foram os Minyas ajuntados  
Para que o veo dourado combatessem,  
Na fatidica nau, que ousou primeira  
Tentar o mar Euxino, aventureira."

IV, 83.

Has this not the ring of the noblest human language, that in which love, duty and religion are made one?

Gentlemen, I have finished my third call among American students as a Camonian pilgrim, and I can assure you that I do not feel at all ashamed of begging for his glory. When I see his great Poem so completely ignored as it is in foreign countries, I do not grieve for him. What does it matter to Antares, or to Sirius, if they are not seen in all their grandeur by all men? A few telescopes turned on them suffice to their glory in our little planet. But Camoens has a greater solace than the admiration of the few. The Portuguese language will always be called "the language of Camoens," while no poet in the world has more the devotion of his own people, nay, of all who speak his language, than he. No foreigner that would read of the national celebration of his third centenary, in 1880, both in Portugal and Brazil, would doubt that. Those were divine honors. Two nations could not have rendered them to a poet three centuries after his death if he had not left in the hearts and minds of all who speak his language an inspiration, a cohesive and elevating

impulse, which only true creators can kindle forever. Homer has no readers compared with the writers of the day, still we must not fear for him.

There is now about forty years that I follow the march of literature, and its relative place in the world seems to me to become each day smaller. This, we must remember, is no longer the Age of writing; it is already the Age of typewriting. The Manuscript is dead. I doubt if the affinities of inspiration with the machine will ever be the same as with the pen. Allow me to express to you my whole faith. I do not believe that there is anywhere through heavens a register for money deals, however great; but I believe there is one for intellectual creations, and that the work of Homer, Dante, Camoens, Shakespere, and their like, transcends the Earth.







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